

Discovering the Colonial Past of the Habsburg Monarchy

A Report

Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics 

HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of History; 4 Tóth Kálmán utca, 1097
Budapest, Hungary; csaplar.degovics.krisztian@abtk.hu

A contribution in the Oxford *World History of Empire*, published in 2021, contained an important, if underappreciated, warning about the difficulties of drawing boundaries, both geographical and cognitive, in the context of late nineteenth-century imperialisms. As Frederick Cooper observed, “[t]he conceptual boundaries in the late nineteenth century between »colonial« empires and the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman empires were not clear cut” at the time.

“The Ottomans had their colonizing ventures in Yemen and what is now Libya, the Russians in Central Asia; Austria-Hungary took over the Ottoman province of Bosnia and treated it as something of a colony. These empires had their historic ways of dealing with local elites and adapted across their domains in flexible ways that complicated colonial-type relationships.”¹

This important caveat was revisited in greater detail in the framework of a workshop entitled *Discovering the Colonial Past of the Habsburg Monarchy (Entdeckung der kolonialen Vergangenheit der Habsburgermonarchie)* at the Collegium Hungaricum in Vienna, Austria, convened by Iván Bertényi and Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics and held on 27 May 2024. In contrast to previous events on similar topics in Vienna, where mainly scholars from the field of social sciences (anthropology, literary theory, cultural studies) gave presentations, this workshop aimed to bring together Austrian and Hungarian historians and geographers who could provide new insights into the question on the basis of previously unexplored archival material. Participants included Barbara Haider-Wilson (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies) and Walter Sauer (University of Vienna,

1 Cooper, “Epilogue. Beyond Empire.”

Department of Economic and Social History), as well as Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics, Gábor Demeter (both senior research fellows at the HUN-REN Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of History), and Ferenc Gyuris, geographer (Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Natural Sciences, Department of Social and Economic Geography).

Difficulties of researching the colonial past of Habsburg Central Europe

Until recently, research into the colonial past of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy remained largely unexplored in Austrian and Hungarian historiography. The lack of relevant research can partly be traced back to the fact that the Habsburg Empire did not consider itself a colonial power and did not represent itself as such. After its collapse in 1918, the national historiographies and political elites of the successor states of the Danubian empire denied even more vehemently the existence of a colonial past than imperial propaganda had done.²

Another reason for the lack of relevant research is that it is difficult to apply theories and perspectives related to colonialism to the Dual Monarchy. Historians of Central Europe essentially shared the views of Robert A. Kann, who was of the opinion that the application of the colonization framework to the European continent was very problematic.³ On the one hand, the theories were tailored to tackling the colonial pasts of the Atlantic and not East and Central European countries. Additionally, the terminology of international diplomacy and law was far from being as uniform prior to 1914 as has been suggested by international historiography. The Habsburg Empire, for instance, had its own imperial terminology and its own concepts, among other things, in connection with empire building and colonial enterprise—these concepts render comparison with (and even analysis based on) Atlantic colonialism difficult.

At the same time, the topic merits closer scrutiny. Historians have paid little attention to the fact that in the 1890s, the imperial and royal ministers of the joint affairs and finance of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy made an explicit attempt to include colonial ambitions in the Austro–Hungarian foreign policy portfolio formally. The unusual constitutional structure of Austria–Hungary made this a challenging task. According to the laws on which the Compromise of 1867 rested, Emperor and King Franz Joseph’s realm was divided into two large public entities, the Austrian Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary, each of which had its own government and parliament. The joint ministers of foreign affairs, finance, and war in

2 Sauer, ed., *K. u. k. kolonial*, 7–8.

3 Kann, “Trends Towards Colonialism,” 164–80.

Vienna were only allowed to deal with the joint matters defined in precise terms by the representatives of the two halves of the new empire in 1867. Formally, they did not even form a government for the whole empire. The two parliaments could only deal with the joint ministers separately, through delegations of their own envoys.

The establishment of a separate portfolio for colonial affairs proved an insurmountable political and social challenge for the joint ministers because any ambitions to this end could have easily undermined the stability of the dualist system, which had been achieved at no small cost. Colonial policy, after all, raised a number of questions that touched on constitutional law. Who would be responsible for colonization, the empire as a whole or a separate Austria and a separate Hungary? Who would finance the costs of colonial ventures, and who would benefit from these investments? Would colonial issues come to constitute a new, fourth portfolio of joint affairs?

Since the study of Austria-Hungary's colonial past has so far remained more or less limited to case studies that have, for the most part, been focused on Eastern and Southeastern Europe, a fine-grained conceptualization marking out of the place of the Dual Monarchy in Europe's colonial past in the global context has remained undeveloped, if not altogether missing. As Iván Bertényi, director of the Hungarian Historical Institute in Vienna, pointed out in his opening remarks, colonialism in the context of the Austro-Hungarian Empire remains controversial to the point that several invitees to the workshop declined to participate due to what they perceived as the lack of an actual subject matter. Without colonies, what colonialism could have existed to merit analysis? At the same time, he also stressed that the need to avoid framing Austro-Hungarian colonialism according to the moral framework currently supporting challenges to the troubling legacies of colonial imperialisms: the task of the researchers, in this context, remains establishing the outlines of Austro-Hungarian colonialism before any judgment may be passed.

The Ballhausplatz's colonization efforts in the 1890s

The presenters accordingly focused on providing new information that permitted theorizing Austro-Hungarian colonialism on a more solid footing. Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics raised the subject of the role of Referatur III in the Joint Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the 1890s, when Gustav von Kálnoky and Agenor Gołuchowski attempted to make the issue of colonialism a part of the political agenda in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Among the departments of the Ballhausplatz in the 1890s, Referatur III was responsible for so-called colonial affairs (except for the Red Sea region), which were handled by the head of the office, Adalbert Fuchs. As no archival unit was organized from the documents of the Referatur III, it is difficult

to reconstruct the portfolio of the office's activities. Through the presentation of three hitherto unknown (African and Albanian) files, Csaplár-Degovics could nevertheless demonstrate that the Austro–Hungarian Foreign Ministry was not only concerned with the colonial policies of other powers but that there also existed a discourse about potential colonies and how to profit from their existence.

It is important to note that pioneering work on this matter had already been done by Evelyn Kolm,⁴ who reconstructed how the so-called *colonialpolitische Angelegenheiten* or *Kolonialpolitik* were finally assigned to Referatur III in 1891 and how, in 1894, these tasks were complemented with the articulation of interests of the Danube Monarchy. The next reform of Referatur III took place in 1903. At that time, because of the parliamentary rejection of the openly colonial attempts at Ballhausplatz, an administrative reorganization transferred colonial affairs to a lower administrative unit no longer headed by Fuchs but by Ernst Schmit von Tavera.⁵

There existed, however, another reason for the reorganization of Referatur III: at the turn of the century, Ballhausplatz attempted to formally transform Austria–Hungary into a colonial power. Joint Foreign Minister Gołuchowski wanted to establish Austro–Hungarian colonies mainly in Africa or the Far East (of which only the Tientsin Concession was realized). His efforts were supported by the joint Finance Minister, Benjámín Kállay, who had the task of gaining the support of the Hungarian parliamentarians for these plans, in addition to the Hungarian government (which he failed to do).

In an effort to build additional societal support, the Austro–Hungarian Colonial Society (*Österreichisch-Ungarische Kolonialgesellschaft*) was also founded in 1894 under the leadership of Ernst Franz Weisl and modeled on the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft*, which had been established in 1882. Just as the German Chancellor Leo von Caprivi cooperated with the German Colonial Society, Agenor Gołuchowski also took the Austrian namesake under his political patronage. Between 1895 and 1902, the liaison between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Society was provided by Referatur III, led by Fuchs, and the Austrian–Hungarian Consul General Norbert Schmucker, who was a member of the Society.⁶

The colonial affairs of Referatur III involved following the activities of the European powers in Africa and gauging opportunities for the Dual Monarchy to enter the scramble.⁷ At the same time, for Austria–Hungary, the Balkans remained

4 Kolm, *Die Ambitionen Österreich–Ungarns*.

5 Csaplár-Degovics, *Nekünk nincsenek gyarmataink*, 257–60.

6 *Jahresbericht der Österreichisch-Ungarische Colonial-Gesellschaft*, 38; “Kolonialpolitik,” 18–19; Loidl, “Kolonialpropaganda”; Loidl, “Europa ist zu eng geworden.”

7 ÖStA HHStA PA XL/149/Varia Interna 1895, Mémoire from the year 1895 on African colonial issues, written by Adalbert Fuchs.

an immediate concern, an issue that lent itself to being framed (in part) in colonial terms. An 1896 interministerial conference, for instance, sought to lay the groundwork for establishing a protectorate in Albania in the event of the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. The conference brought together the old Eastern department of the foreign ministry with the newer colonial bureau, as well as business actors such as Austrian Lloyd, and foresaw the inclusion of the Colonial Society, as well. Such constellations clearly reflect the merging of traditional policy concerns and novel patterns of conceptualizing regions of interest to the empire.

As a final example, the Austro–Hungarian Consul General in Shanghai, Julius Pisko, was tasked with visiting British, French, German, and Portuguese colonies as ‘a commercial correspondent’ and sending reports on his travels to the Austrian and Hungarian trade ministries in addition to the joint foreign ministry. Pisko had to assess investment opportunities, look for markets for the goods of the Austrian and the Hungarian subempires, suggest possible forms of economic colonization, and contact ‘Austro–Hungarian colonies’ (i.e., diasporas) in Africa and Latin America. Julius Pisko was a committed believer in colonialism and one of the *Machers* (implementers) of the new Austro–Hungarian Albanian politics. While these cases fall short of a comprehensive reconstruction of the activities of Referatur III, they demonstrate how this office could have served as a basis for the creation of a department for colonial affairs at a higher level at Ballhausplatz and how colonial thought could enter Austro–Hungarian government through its capillaries.

K. u. k. colonial: Habsburg Monarchy and European rule in Africa

Walter Sauer’s contribution complemented the survey of governmental initiatives with an analysis of colonial figures of Central European origin, reconstructing the contexts of their activities in the Austrian, Hungarian, and Austro–Hungarian relations of the time while also embedding their biographies in the context of European colonial developments in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Sauer discussed the Austrian travel writer Ida Pfeiffer (1797–1858), the Czech physician Emil Holub (1847–1902), the Hungarian hunter Count Sámuel Teleki (1845–1916) and his companion, the well-known Austrian naval officer and geographer Ludwig von Höhnel (1857–1942) as well as two Austrians, colonial trailblazer Oskar Baumann (1864–1899) and scientist Rudolf Pösch (1870–1921).

Pfeiffer wrote several bestselling books about her travels, visited Egypt in 1842, and traveled to Mauritius and Madagascar between 1856 and 1858. Holub, a great fan of David Livingstone’s adventures, took part in three expeditions between 1873 and 1887, visiting South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. Höhnel, who

would in 1899 become *aide-de-camp* to Franz Joseph, explored with Teleki between 1886 and 1889 the previously unknown areas of Tanzania and Kenya. Baumann, an ethnologist and geographer, entered the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Tanzania, as well as Rwanda, Burundi, and Zanzibar between 1885 and 1899, partly to promote Austrian business interests, partly in the service of German colonial lobbies. Ethnographer and anthropologist Pöch from Galicia gained fame between 1902 and 1909 for his travels to the West African coast and Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and South Africa.

Sauer highlighted that no single overarching colonial blueprint existed. Pfeiffer's and Holub's trips were private initiatives. The same was also true for Teleki but not so for his companion Höhnel, who was granted two years' paid leave of absence for the African expedition. This was made possible by Maximilian Daublebsky von Sterneck zu Ehrenstein (1829–1897), who became commander of the Austro–Hungarian navy in 1883. The romantic Sterneck was an enterprising commander who believed strongly in the cause of overseas colonialism. To win the support of the joint ministries and the political and economic elites of the two subempires and the wider social strata of Austria–Hungary for the idea of colonization in Africa, he sought to demonstrate the social utility of the imperial and royal navy in word and deed.

Representing a different type and *modus operandi*, Baumann and Pöch were classic colonial actors on the African continent. As a citizen of Austria, Baumann put his geographical knowledge at the service first of the Austrian business community and then of the German colonial authorities, serving on several expeditions as a cartographer, scout, and explorer, which sometimes included brutal violence against the local population. Pöch's trip was initiated by the Austrian Academy of Sciences so that Austrian academia could play its part in racial research on African ethnic groups.

As a consequence, the trips varied wildly—from the lone Pfeiffer to the large expedition and hunting party of Teleki. However, with the partial exception of Pfeiffer, all journeys had colonial relevance. Not only did they legitimize European colonialism through their actions, but they either contributed to its territorial expansion (like Holub, Teleki/Höhnel,⁸ and Baumann) or advanced business (Holub, Baumann) or scientific (Pöch) interests. This is true even if the ultimate beneficiary in most cases was not Austria–Hungary but the British Empire or the German *Reich*. The biographies of the above-mentioned actors demonstrate that Central European citizens were also involved in the European colonization of Africa. In addition, the travels and expeditions described above have a material and physical heritage that the societies of the successor states of Austria–Hungary can view in various

8 “Die Expedition des Grafen Teleki in das Gebiet des Kilimandscharo und Vorläufiger Bericht.”

museums. The former travelers, through their writings, also passed on many racist stereotypes which are still prevalent today.

Austria's peaceful crusade in the Holy Land, 1839–1917

A further ambiguous setting for colonial logics was explored in Barbara Haider-Wilson's lecture about the Habsburg dynasty's denominational ambitions and political attitudes towards the Holy Land, interpreting the notion of a 'peaceful crusade' (*friedlicher Kreuzzug*), frequently used by the dynasty and Austrian publicists. Can the Monarchy's, and within it Austria's, relations with the Holy Land be understood within the context of colonial studies? In the nineteenth century, among the non-governmental social movements that sought to stimulate European Palestine policy, alongside the traditional Christian and Jewish interests in Palestine, were the Anglican-Chiliastic concept of the 'restoration of the Jews' and the idea of *friedlicher Kreuzzug*. This was particularly widespread on the continent, including in the Habsburg Monarchy. These aimed to gradually 'reclaim' the Holy Land for Christianity by religious, cultural, and philanthropic means.

All of the above-mentioned tendencies were often linked to demands for the European colonization of Palestine. Over time, economic considerations also appeared next to cultural ambitions. The Austrian protagonists of the idea of Christian colonies usually ignored the fact that there was an Arab population in Palestine. The calls for colonization in the Habsburg Monarchy with a view to the Holy Land were supported by Georg Gatt, a priest from Tyrol who had established a missionary station in Gaza in 1879. But many others had travelled there before him, establishing an imaginary about the Holy Land in Austria. These included Franz Wilhelm Sieber, Joseph Salzbacher, Anton Prokesch, Joseph Russegger, Ida Pfeiffer, and even priest Jacques Mislin, a tutor of the future Emperor and King, Franz Joseph.

One characteristic in Holy Land travelogues regarding the view of the population was a strong focus on one's own denominational group. A second was that the local Arab population (when visible) was used as an important indicator of life at the time of Jesus. A third fundamental topos cannot be separated from these: Palestine, like the Ottoman Empire as a whole, was seen as backward and in decline. This topos fed into the popular interpretation according to which this region was crying out for European development and modernization.

The Habsburg Monarchy's presence was initially reflected in its role as protector of the book printing press in the Franciscan monastery of St Salvator (founded in 1846); then, an Austrian hospice was opened in Jerusalem (1863), and a Maltese hospital in Tantur (1876/77). Georg Gatt's missionary station was founded in Gaza (1879), and a hospital was built in Nazareth (1882/84).

The international competition for the Holy Land, which was constitutive for the European powers, was never about territorial claims and direct plans for conquest but always about varieties of religious and cultural influence and supremacy. The Habsburg Monarchy saw itself as a major Catholic great power and was viewed as such on the international stage. Some areas (such as the Austrian hospice and the observance of ecclesiastical honorary rights) had been watched over by Austrian church-state elites for decades. In addition, there were also initiatives inspired, for example, by members of Catholic orders, which were ‘slowed down’ by overriding foreign policy concerns or domestic political constellations. However, the much more pervasive interests of Catholic milieus remained visible, kept alive by travelogues and other publications. The Austrian society was not immune to the spirit of the time and was generally convinced of their claims to the region. The Holy Land, as seen by the imperial society, also demonstrated—and this is of fundamental importance for the late Habsburg Monarchy—that colonial imaginations need not be connected to territorial possession: influence building could rest on colonial logics and still bring to bear imaginaries of race, civilization, and development on the relationship between the colonial power and the target of the imperial policies.

Imagining the Hungarian Balkans

Hungarian colonialism evolved along different routes and was fed by different traditions, if not without contact with Austrian patterns. Focusing on the Balkans, even the early voyages there provided many lessons for the economic ambitions of the Hungarian pre-1848 Age of Reform. Gábor Demeter argued in his contributions that most of the scientific expeditions in the Balkans had political goals in the background. There were some state-financed ventures, but the political motivation is evident even in the case of the self-financed journey of Széchenyi, who wanted to establish connections with the Ottoman Porte and newly autonomous Serbia in order to obtain their acquiescence regarding the regulation of the Danube waterway. Three years after his journey, in 1833, he was appointed governmental supervisor of the regulation works.

Sometimes, scientific journeys were financed through secret funds. The parallel diary of the young consul general in Belgrade, Benjámín Kállay, and the travel description of Kanitz in his work *Donaubulgarien*, concerning their joint travel to Vidin in 1868, reveals strong cooperation between politics and science. After the joint journey, Kanitz received 6,000 forints for his work on the recommendation of Kállay from a secret extraordinary fund of the Hungarian government (bypassing parliamentary approval).

Collecting information was possible with the aid of other civil agents of

private economic actors. The linguist Béla Erődi-Harrach (the future president of the Hungarian Geographical Society in 1893) served as an interpreter on the international expedition led by Wilhelm Pressel and Hochstetter, financially supported by Baron Mauritz Hirsch, known for his railway constructions. Erődi's account in the Hungarian Geographical Bulletin reveals how railway engineers were bribed by authorities, or the entrepreneur bribed the authorities, to manipulate the railway tracks. Finally, the Ottoman railway track was laid down according to the interest of Austria–Hungary as a branch of the future Belgrade–Saloniki line, and not according to the wishes of the Ottoman Empire, which wanted a direct railway connection between Constantinople and Bosnia.

Despite evident cooperation, rivalry and suspicion between Austria and Hungary did not disappear. Each party accused the other of pursuing their own goals. When the young historian Lajos Thallóczy traveled to Ottoman Albania in 1882 under the name Lemaics and contributed to the outbreak of a revolt in order to test the willingness of Albanians to cooperate with Austria–Hungary and test the Ottoman reaction, many, like Engelbert Deusch, thought that the provocation of Albanians was the initiative of the Hungarian government (which was not the case). Similarly, the Hungarian expedition in 1885–1886 emerged partly from the rivalry between Austria and Hungary and other powers, as Hungary was losing ground in the competition for the Balkans. Criticizing the consular system, Adolf Strausz advised the establishment of scientific institutions (a Museum of Commerce or a consular academy such as that already existing in Austria) to promote and, at the same time, veil industrial espionage supported by Thallóczy's circle and industrialists such as a member of the powerful Weiss family.⁹

It was not unique that field trips with political agendas were disguised as ethnographic research. The Austrian consul general in Greece, Georg von Hahn, the founding father of Albanology, was accompanied by a Hungarian-born photographer, Dr. Josef Székely, during his famous trip to Ottoman Albania and Macedonia. It was this professional chemist (a scholar, again recommended officially by the Scientific Academy in Vienna) who took the first-ever photos of the Balkans in 1863—including not only landscapes but townscapes, bridges, and even brand-new Ottoman military barracks.¹⁰

So science meant 'legitimation'—a cover story for explorations in the Balkans with economic and political backgrounds, and it also meant publicity, popularity, and the dissemination of the thoughts of the mentioned personalities considered scholars. The Hungarian Geographical Bulletin (*Földrajzi Értesítő*), the first Hungarian scientific organ to give accounts of recent explorations, indirectly also

9 On the Weiss family, see: Bernád, "Weiss von Csepel, Manfréd Baron," 96–97.

10 Elsie, *Writing in Light*, 17–76.

communicated hidden political interests. Among the contributors of the journal, one may find Ágoston Berecz and Lajos Sámi, future Turanists, and Ignác Goldziher and Adolf Strausz, who were professors at the Royal Hungarian Oriental Academy of Trade in Budapest (1899–1920) and who promoted economic penetration into the Balkans. (This institution was often visited by a representative of ‘imperial policy,’ Thallóczy, to coordinate joint efforts).

Overseas European colonization as a topical issue for Hungarian geography

The final paper, by Ferenc Gyuris, focused on exploring the relationship between overseas colonization and Austro–Hungarian colonization attempts in the Balkans from the perspective of Hungarian geographers between 1870 and 1920. The first years saw the institutionalization of the discipline in the country, with university departments set up in Pest and Cluj-Napoca (Kolozsvár). The Hungarian Geographical Society (*Magyar Földrajzi Társaság*, MFT) was founded in 1872, with its journal *Földrajzi Közlemények* (Geographical Review) launched one year later. Although Hungary did not join the race of great European powers to found colonies in Africa and Asia, the leadership of MFT considered it necessary to report on new geographical discoveries and overseas European colonization. They regarded doing so as a prerequisite for securing a ‘rightful position’ for geography in Hungary, similar to ‘the whole civilized Europe,’ also guaranteeing that Hungary would not lag behind ‘full-fledged European nations.’

Földrajzi Közlemények published several short articles in Hungarian about overseas European colonies as early as the 1870s, which mainly were compiled and translated from studies of German, French, and British authors. This reflected the international power relations in contemporary academic networks and robust linkages of Hungarian academia, especially with the leading centers of Germanophone science and geography. These articles predominantly maintained the content and glorious tone of the original writings, popularizing imperial narratives and presenting the colonial project as a ‘civilizing mission.’

Hungarian authors also wrote an increasing number of articles on colonization, but these were far from having a consensual opinion about such narratives. The internationally renowned traveler and orientalist Ármin Vámbéry (1832–1913), who was to become the president of MFT, internalized Western European colonialist views, especially those from Britain. His racist and imperialistic discourse positioned many indigenous peoples in European colonies as biologically inferior. The opinion of János Hunfalvy (1820–1888), head of the first geography department and president of MFT, was almost diametrically opposed. Hunfalvy also wrote positively

about the global spread of European culture and newly set up hospitals and schools in the colonies, but he sharply criticized the brutal side of colonization. He devotedly opposed racist and environmentalist arguments and any claim that the subjugation of indigenous people would be either a 'natural law' or a justified act. As he put it in a strongly worded speech at the university in 1875, "We cannot accept the fundament of this fake speculation, and we have to protest against its false conclusions."¹¹

Most contributors, however, belonged to the group of hesitants who were neither clearly colonial nor anti-colonial. As a common point, they referred to the indigenous peoples in Australia, Southeast Asia, and Africa as culturally 'primitive.' But they also often referred positively to the 'natural talent' of these peoples, whom they did not claim to be 'biologically inferior' nor responsible for their own situation. Instead, they tended to blame the geographical isolation of these peoples, i.e., their limited opportunities for communication with other peoples and their 'rough treatment' by Asian and European overlords. Several authors suggested that many actual virtues of indigenous people were simply not recognized by many Europeans, including their smartness, rich legends, sense of honor, and pre-colonial material cultures, like in Central Africa, with urban centers predating the arrival of the colonizers. Critiques sometimes targeted the entire mode of 'Western' knowledge production, seen as proceeding on the basis of preconceptions and unwillingness to engage with realities on the ground.

In sum, overseas European colonization became a topical issue in Hungarian geography, although Austria–Hungary itself did not possess colonies in the classical sense. Partly due to their variegated biographical trajectories, Hungarian geographers had different and conflicting views about colonization. The context, however, changed towards the end of the nineteenth century. With Hungary gradually becoming economically and politically more powerful within the Austro–Hungarian Empire, many representatives of the Hungarian power and cultural elite, including many geographers, dreamed about expansion toward the Balkans. This 'challenge' was in need of a discourse of legitimation that fit into the overarching civilizational discourse and affirmed the nation's status as civilized and advanced. This need, in turn, resulted in the emergence of a discourse in Hungarian geography about the countries of the peninsula dominated by paternalistic, triumphant concepts and narratives well-known from standard discourses about overseas colonialism. This shift highlights the important role of context and interest in the production of geographical knowledge and contributed to reconfiguring the domestic discourse on colonies and empires in a manner that marginalized previous ethical concerns and represented ideational transfers from overseas colonizer elites and academia.

11 Hunfalvy, "Hunfalvy János tanévnyitó beszéde," 75. For more details: Gyuris, Jobbitt, and Gyóri, "Hungarian Geography between 1870 and 1920."

Discussion

The multiperspectival discussion of what could be considered colonial in the context of Austro–Hungarian relations understandably sparked debate following the individual panels. Konrad Clewing of the IOS Leibniz-Institut in Regensburg highlighted that fundamental dilemmas still need to be resolved, inter alia the question of whether a single, imperial colonialism existed in the Dual Monarchy or whether parallel undertakings were unfolding in the two halves of the empire. Sauer argued in this context that while Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Austrian, etc. colonial actors had their own ties to the colonial past of their nation or their home country, and they also contributed to shaping the colonial view of their own nation, their efforts were both framed by and contributed to an emerging imperial perspective on colonialism. As Haider-Wilson added, the Habsburg dynasty was itself a colonial actor. The consular jurisdiction and the religious protectorate of the Habsburg Monarchy in parts of the Ottoman Empire had their foundation in old agreements with the Ottoman sultans (*capitulations*). In the case of the Habsburg Monarchy, it is therefore worth pondering how many different meanings the adjective ‘imperial’ has in the context of Austria–Hungary’s colonial past. At the same time, as Csaplár-Degovics observed, Austrian colonial ambitions had different objectives to Hungarian ones. While the Austrian imperial actors were mainly interested in overseas territories, specifically Latin America, Africa, or the Far East, the Hungarian approach focused on the Balkans and Anatolia. At the same time, an imperial colonial undertaking was both necessary and acceptable as long as it did not threaten to upset the terms of the 1867 Compromise.

Concerning the importation of ‘blueprints’ from the more advanced German Empire, the strength of domestic logics also shone through: while a lot could be adopted from foreign models, colonialism was embedded in a net of Austro–Hungarian concerns and traditions that guided its evolution in the Dual Monarchy—a realization shared by several panelists. In this regard, it might help to conduct a prosographical study of the two known lists of members of the Austro–Hungarian Colonial Society, while Stephen Gross could serve as a basis for examining exactly which German colonial patterns Austria–Hungary might have followed, further helping to pin down the cognitive frames shaping the discourse.¹²

The second panel debate highlighted yet more previously unexplored issues. These included the role of the Hungarian emigration of 1848/49 in knowledge production and knowledge transfer about the (Near) East—meaning the Balkans and Ottoman Asia (Konrad Clewing). In this context, Demeter observed that Hungarian ‘49ers established themselves in Ruse, Vidin, Constantinople, Izmir, Damascus, Alexandria, and Cairo, and these diasporas traded information. After the dissolution

12 Gross, *Export Empire*.

of the camp of emigrants in Vidin, those who chose Islam contributed to the maintenance of the network of the emigration, and as Ottoman state officials and officers, they became representatives of the *Tanzimat*. According to Kemal Karpat, the scholarly activities of former military officers of the 1848 revolutionary army who later converted to Islam played an important role in the birth of the modern Turkish national movement in Anatolia.¹³ After 1867, both the independentist opposition and the pro-Compromise government exploited this facility. Hungarians were much more concerned and involved in the Balkan policy of Austria–Hungary than in any other component of its foreign policy. This had defensive and offensive parts, too. The defensive part was driven by the fear of the establishment of a greater Slavic state that would attract the Slavs of Hungary. The offensive part was partly driven by the Russophobia associated with the experience of 1849. This also resulted in contradictions between the Austrian and Hungarian subempires.

Other members of the 1848/49 revolutionary generation were also the first to articulate the issue of colonialism in the Hungarian lower house after 1867 and laid the foundations of the Hungarian political definition of colonialism. As Csaplár-Degovics observed, they were able to do so because many members of this generation had visited European colonies between 1849 and 1867, mainly in North Africa and India, and had lived as emigrants for many years in Britain and France, where they had had the opportunity to learn about the current state of European imperialism and colonialism through the press or their political contacts. Their experience led them to conclude that just as the British Empire or Paris had oppressed its African and Asian colonies, Austria had oppressed Hungary. However, it is important to stress that they had only superficial information about European colonial practice, not knowledge or expertise.

Austro–Hungarian colonialism, as made evident in the contributions to the conference, can be made sense of, but only if a number of caveats are observed. Any discussion must remain attentive to the confluence of domestic knowledges and international knowledge transfers. These confluences have to be properly situated in relation to the political and social structures of the complex edifice that the Dual Monarchy was. The individual parts were associated with different elites with different experiences and outlooks governing their awakening colonial/imperial perspectives.

As Walter Sauer observed in his closing remarks, knowledge of the joint empire or the colonial past of the Austrian subempire cannot be complete without exploring the colonial past of the Hungarian subempire. A properly multiperspectival assessment of Austro–Hungarian colonialism must chart, as a bare minimum, knowledge transfers from overseas colonizers, civilizational imaginaries,

13 Karpat, “Kossuth Törökországban.”

local-regional traditions, the niches for colonial thought in the complex edifice of Austro-Hungarian government, its acceptance by its dual elites, practical initiatives, but also the limitations on the emergence of a full-fledged colonial policy. The workshop attested to the fact that most of these areas have, at the very least, been opened up to further research, but it is just as evident that the work necessary to accomplish these tasks is far from complete. Historians can contribute to this process as they are uniquely positioned to access contemporaneous materials from multiple sources and reconstruct the imaginaries and practices based on these materials, observing both the presence of what without such deep engagement with source materials may perhaps not be seen, but also using the evidence to mark out the boundaries of the historical processes which, obvious linkages notwithstanding, should not be amalgamated into the broader discourse of late nineteenth century (overseas) colonialism.

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